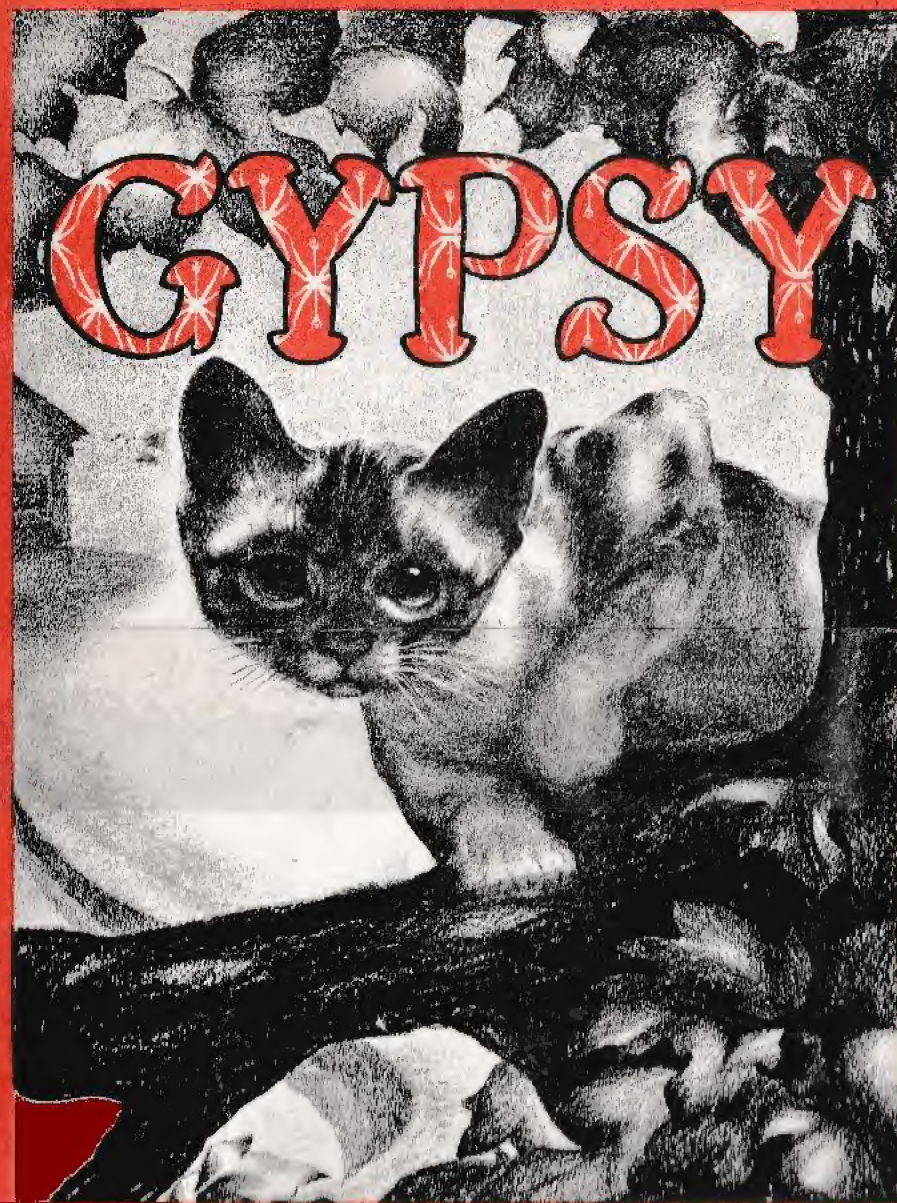


THE STORY OF A KITTEN

by *Kate Seredy*



THE STORY OF A KITTEN

by *Kate Seredy*

Gypsy

Gypsy is a cat; and this is the story of her young life, as a kitten, growing up, moving to a new home, and to independence and wisdom. Kate Seredy pictures the significant incidents in Gypsy's life—learning to wash, to walk, to hunt—and in rhythmical language and beautiful drawings she shows the significant pattern as the young cat delights in her developing power, and her high-handed use of humans for her convenience and comfort.

Young children, so fascinated by their own development and newly discovered world, will appreciate Gypsy, while older readers will also be intrigued by the grace, strength and sagacity of this characteristic cat—so typical of her species. All will admire the skill and careful observation of Miss Seredy's drawings.

"All cat-lovers will enjoy this liberally illustrated story of the life of a kitten."—*Time and Tide*.

"The gift for a cat-lover of any age."—*Lady*.



G Y P S Y

Written and illustrated by

KATE SEREDY

GEORGE G. HARRAP & CO. LTD.

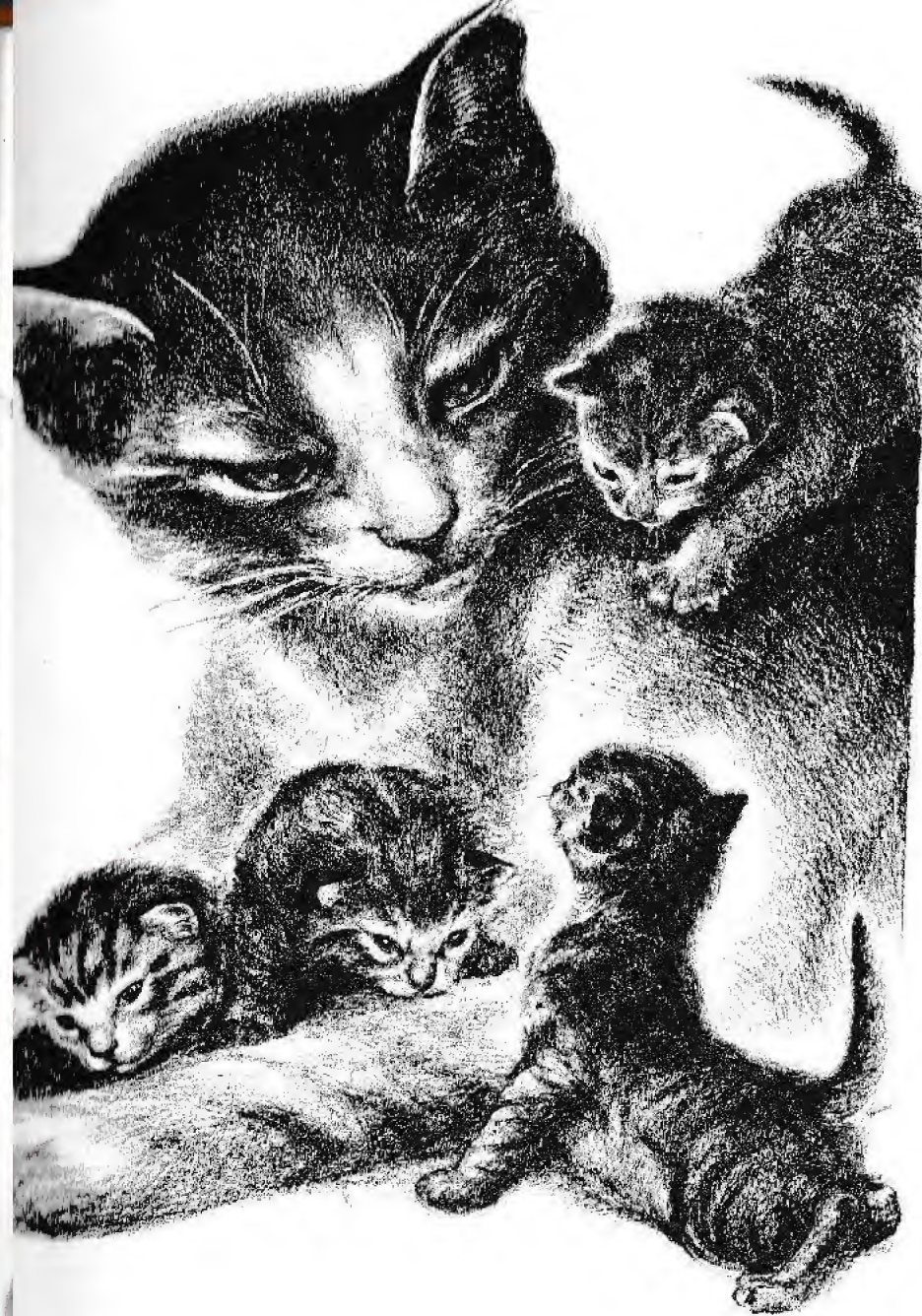
LONDON TORONTO WELLINGTON SYDNEY

Gypsy felt weary but content. She lay on a soft nest of rags, her newborn kittens nursing within the gently curved crescent of herself. She laid her head back and began to purr. Her purr grew loud. It was a song without words.

She fell asleep and, perhaps, in her sleep remembered . . .



The dim, faraway time, another nest, where light first reached her newly opened eyes. And she saw what before she had only felt—a large, strong being, source of food, warmth, and safety.



To be clean was a need—the first rule she learned. Getting washed felt good. The good feeling made a sound inside her; she learned to purr.



Before she could walk, or even crawl, she was carried,
dangling, from the dim safety of the nest into the light
of the world outside.



Soon she could crawl over the edge of the nest by herself, and so found out which of the many small furry parts around her belonged to herself and what they were meant to do. She discovered her tail; it was an endless delight to chase it.



The first pain she felt, from her brother's little claws, made her angry. She found her own claws and soon learned how useful they were in rough-and-tumble play and in climbing.



The first touch of human hands made her shiver and draw away from its strong, strange smell, but soon she came to like it. It was soft and warm, like a little nest around her.



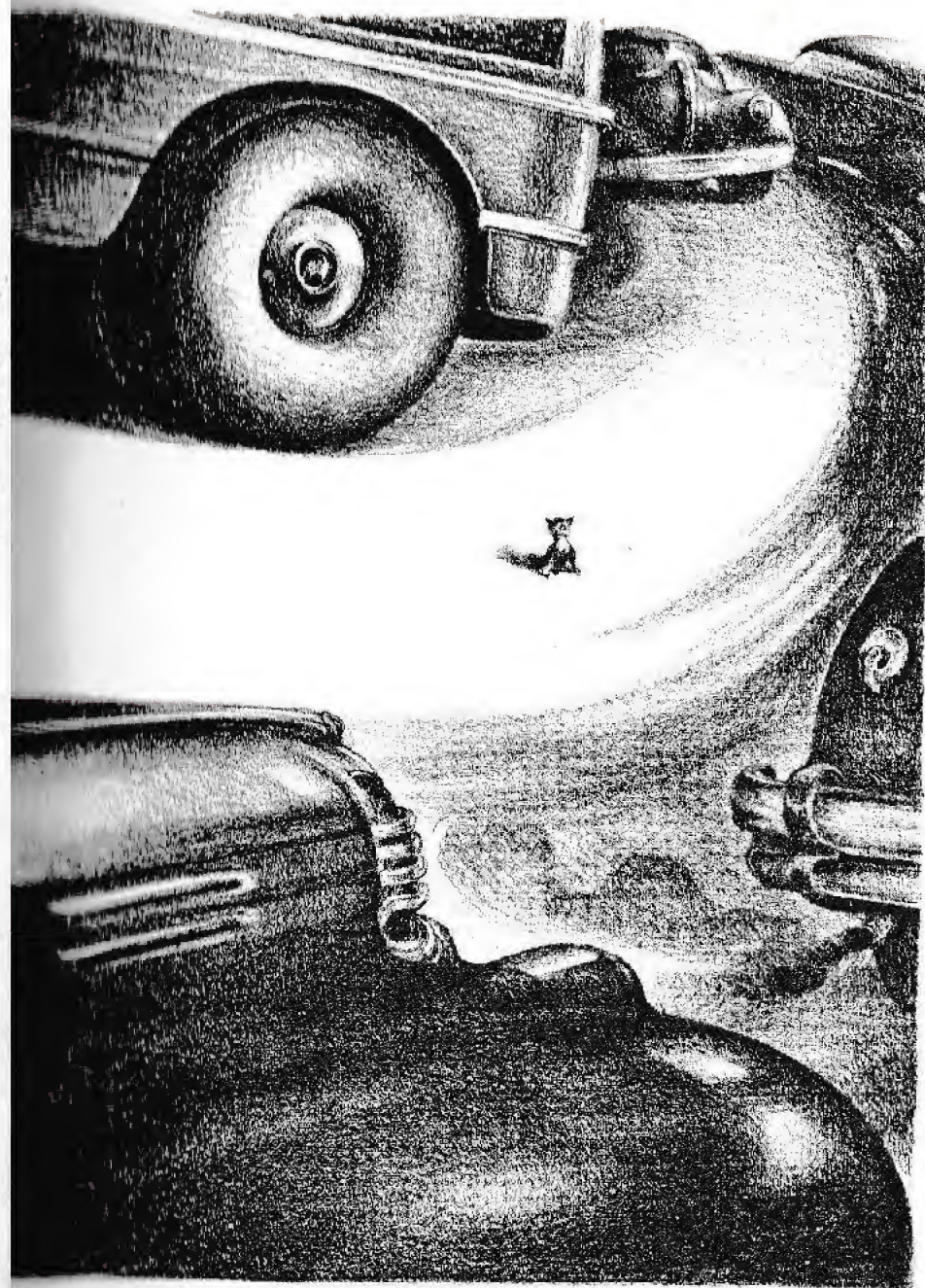
The more she learned, the more there was to learn. New smells, new sounds, new shapes and movements seemed to come much faster than she could find out about them. She wandered farther and farther into an ever-new world. Each thing she learned became part of herself, to be used over and over in new adventures.



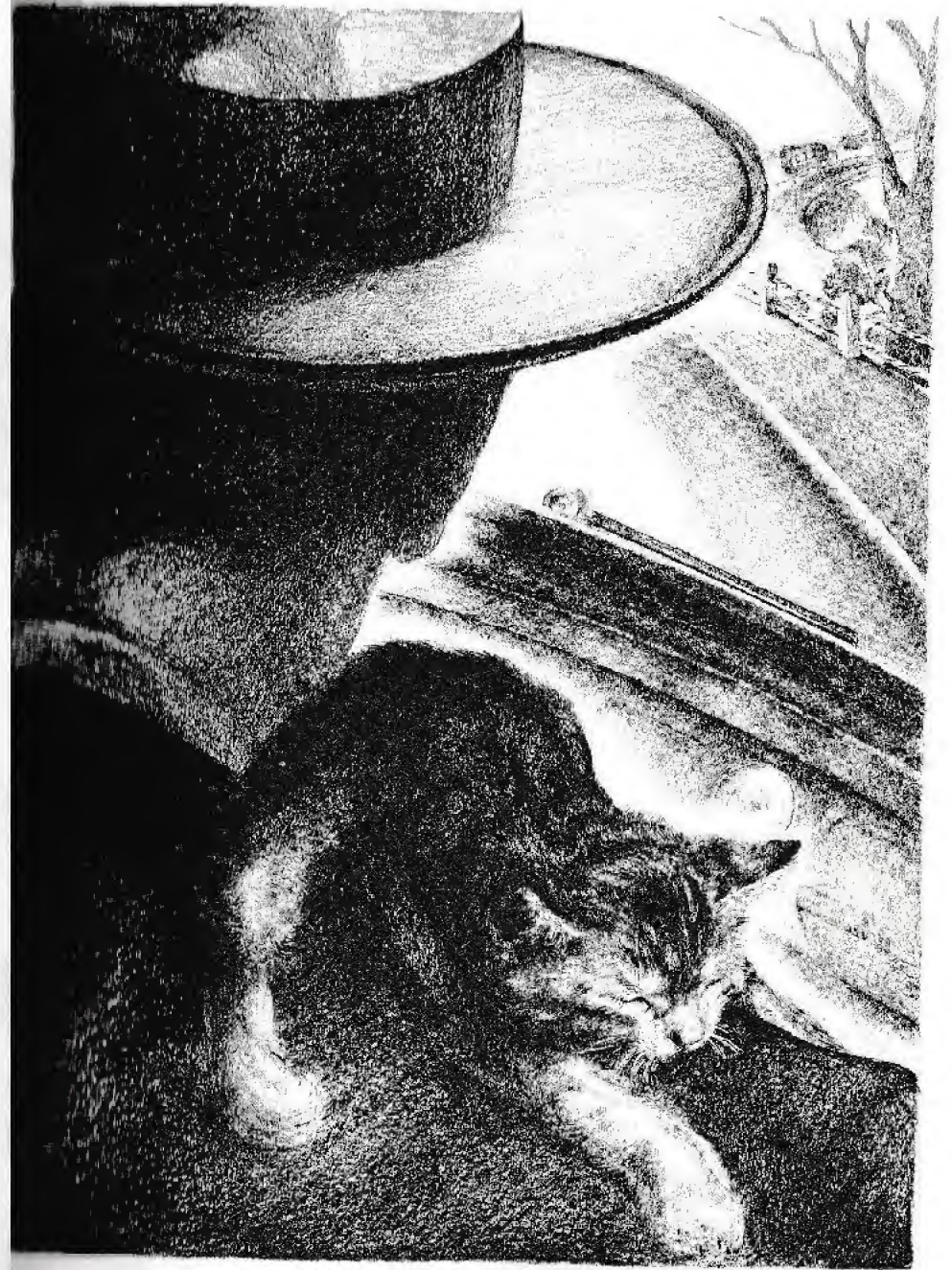
Then one day a swift new motion that had smell, sound, and shape made her run fast and far beyond where she had ever been before. Following it through grass she knew, over stones she knew, through a tangle of branches, she jumped into another world, about which she knew nothing.



It was hard, burning smoothness underneath; endless, glaring light above her; and it was filled with a deep, dreadful sound. All her strength and all she had learned drained out of her and left her unable to move. She cried once, wanting the safety of the nest. There was no answer.



Then human hands closed around her. She clung to them; here was something she knew. Later she crept onto the man's shoulder and went to sleep on that broad, safe perch.



The first thing she felt when she woke was hunger, and the first thing she smelled was food. She drank, sneezing into the milk that came too fast, in a new, easy way, then washed herself and slept again.



For a long time she lived in the world of humans, those giant beings she had to learn about, one by one, until she could tell them apart. She learned the sound they made just for her, that meant herself, "Gypsy." She came to like the sound, she came to like the smell and feel of the humans and of all the strange things they touched.



Quickly she learned to keep her claws sheathed, not to climb on a convenient ankle that, to her, seemed just right to climb on.



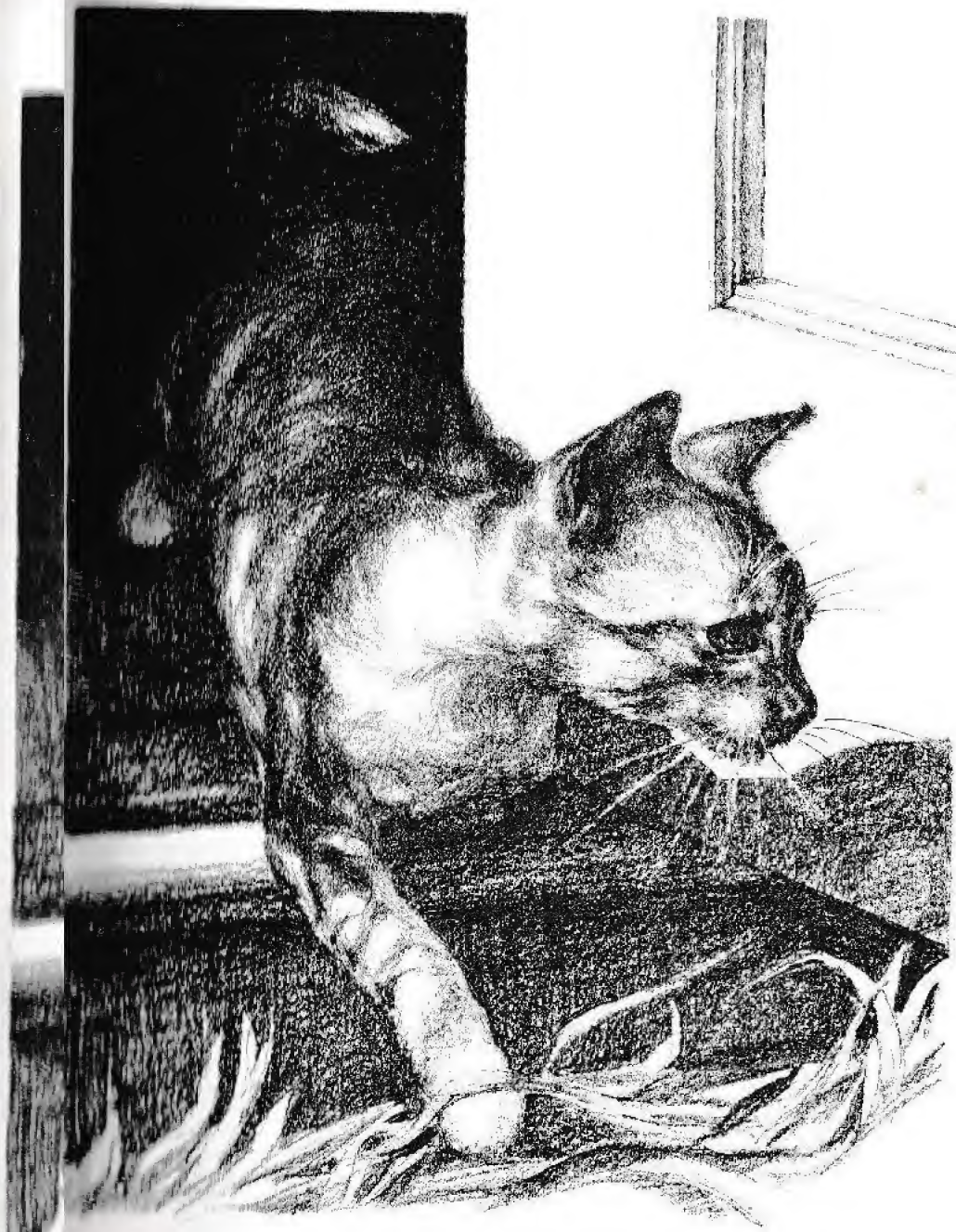
Humans were easy to learn about; theirs was a world always the same. Once she had come to know its smells, sounds, and shapes, the rules they made, it seemed small. There was nothing new in it to learn.



There were openings in it through which she could see, smell, and hear another world, ever new, ever changing. It called to her; she knew its voice. She sat on the window ledge, straining against the thin, hard barrier that kept her in. To search, to prowl, to find the secrets of the world outside was again a need, like hunger. She cried, answering the voices of that world with long, thin wails of longing.



Then one day human hands opened a door, and she, with caution, made her way into the world she knew was hers.



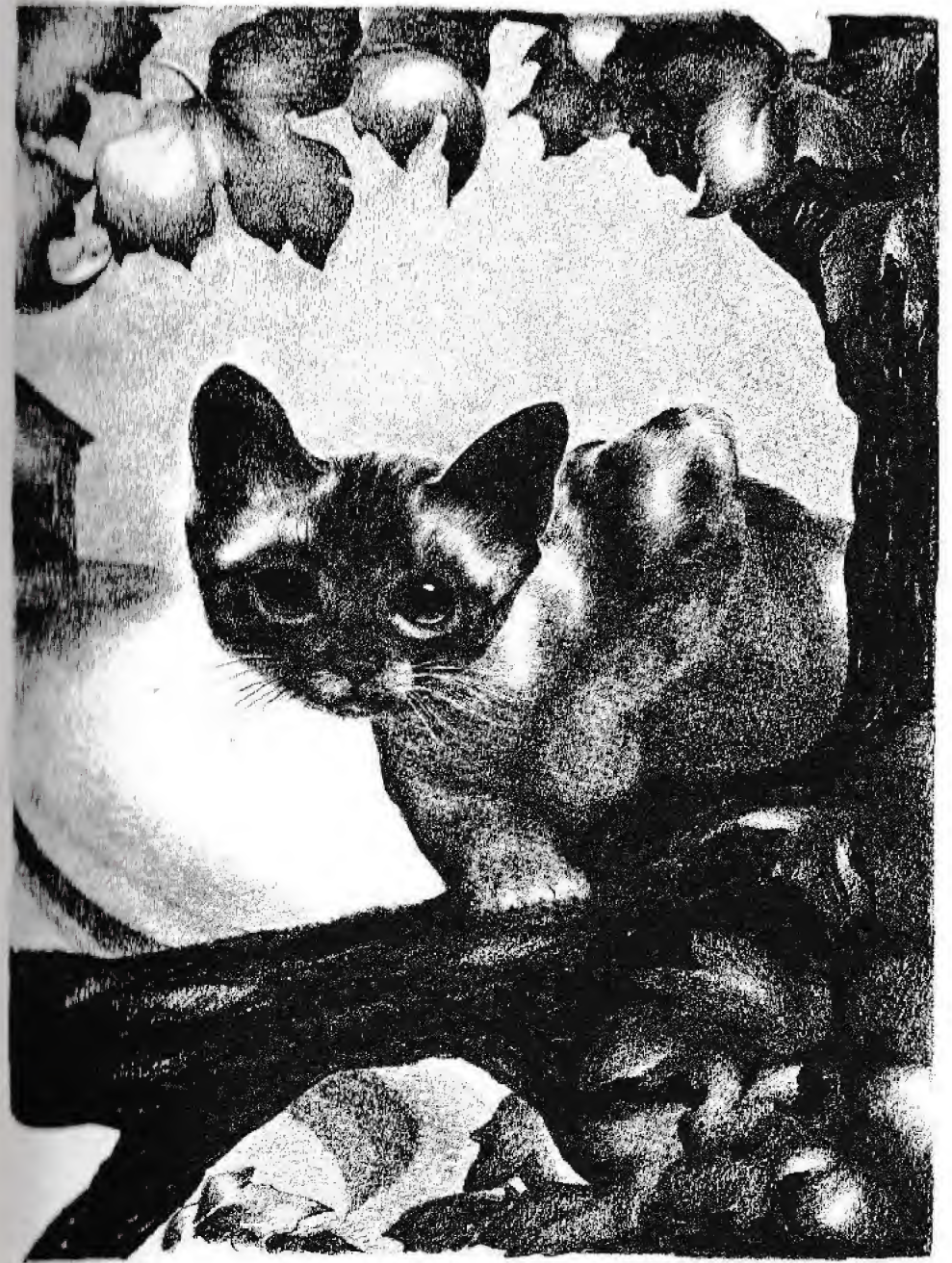
The heat of sun, the smell of grass, the feel of earth were hers. The secret rustlings, play of shadows and light, the taste of a grasshopper she caught and ate were hers. These things she knew.



In time she found she could command the door to open; humans would obey and let her come and go as she pleased. She pleased, often. The world of humans held many things useful to her; food without having to hunt for it, snug safety when she felt tired. With haughty assurance that all inside the door was at her command, she used the world of humans and all it had to offer.



Outdoors, little by little, piece by piece, she came to know the secrets of the dark jungle of shrubs, tangle of weeds. In daylight, and at night under the stars and moon, she prowled, lured on and on to new adventures.



She came to know the creatures that were part of
this world. She watched the hunter and the hunted.



She learned which were her foes



and which her victims.



She met some with caution,



some with contempt. Each new knowledge she gathered from the meetings she held within herself, to be used over and over. Full-grown, sleek, sure of herself, she prowled her world, calling aloud in quest of what she did not yet know.



And from the darkness of one night came an answering call, long, loud, demanding her to come. She met a creature she had never seen before, but she knew him to be like herself, powerful, proud, and wise, her kind—a cat.



Together, his song and hers filled the night.



In the days that followed, her wish to hunt, to prowl on silent, wary feet, remained strong, but now another need was growing. To find a snug, safe, warm place in her own world was growing into an inner demand, sharper than any hunger she had known.

She found it by herself—a dim corner that, she knew, was always dry, that even the strongest wind could never reach. She made it soft, dragging to it pieces of rags she found. As her body grew heavier, more weary, she spent more and more time there, kneading the rags into a snug, rounded hollow. Quietly, patiently, she waited. For what? She did not yet know.



